

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A system, comprising:

5 an endoscope section, having an image receiving portion at an area thereof, which image receiving portion receives an optical image, and transmits the optical image to another portion thereof;

10 a sleeve assembly, sized to cover said endoscope section and extending along an axis, and having an optical element which changes a direction of light coming from an outside said sleeve assembly, and directs light to said image receiving portion of said endoscope section from the area outside said sleeve assembly.

15 2. A system as in claim 1, wherein said optical element includes a mirror which forms a fixed angle relative to an axis of said sleeve assembly.

20 3. A system as in claim 1, further comprising an optical element moving part which allows moving an angle of said optical element relative to the axis of the sleeve assembly.

4. A system as in claim 3, wherein said optical element moving part includes a hinge element which allows moving and angle of said mirror relative to the axis of the sleeve assembly.

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5. A system as in claim 3, wherein said optical element moving part includes an electrically controllable motor.

6. A system as in claim 4, wherein said optical element moving part includes a pressurizable fluid element.

7. A system as in claim 2, further comprising an additional sleeve assembly with an additional mirror that forms a different fixed angle relative to the axis of said sleeve assembly.

8. A system as in claim 2, further comprising a plurality of additional sleeve assemblies, each having a different mirror angle, forming a set.

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9. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a rotatable connection between said sleeve assembly and said endoscope section, wherein said sleeve assembly can be rotated relative to

said endoscope section to adjust an orientation of an image being acquired.

10. A system as in claim 9, further comprising an  
5 orientation part, which is viewable from an outside of said sleeve assembly, and which indicates an orientation of rotation of said sleeve assembly.

11. A system as in claim 9, wherein said rotatable  
10 connection includes an O-ring.

12. A system as in claim 1, wherein an outer surface of  
said endoscope section is smaller than an inner surface of said sleeve assembly, defining a cavity between said endoscope  
15 section and said sleeve assembly.

13. A system as in claim 12, further comprising spacing elements, located in said cavity, and holdings said endoscope section at a specified orientation within said cavity.

14. A system as in claim 12, further comprising a  
20 connection to said cavity.

15. The system as in claim 14, further comprising a fluid source, connected to supply fluid to said cavity through said connection.

5 16. A system as in claim 12, wherein an outlet of said cavity opens near said optical element.

17. A system as in claim 15, wherein an outlet of said cavity opens near said optical element, and is located such that fluid supplied to said cavity is also supplied to said optical element.

18. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a video element, operating based on video from said endoscope section.

19. A system as in claim 18, wherein said optical element includes a mirror, and said video element electronically mirror-inverts at least a portion of an image obtained from said endoscope section.

20. A system as in claim 18, further comprising an extension cable, coupled at one end to said endoscope section and at another end to said video element.

21. A system as in claim 18, further comprising an illumination part, coupled to provide illumination to an area of imaging.

5 22. A system as in claim 18, wherein said video element also includes an image processing system which selectively rotates said image.

10 23. A system as in claim 18, wherein said video element also includes a dual display part, which simultaneously allows displaying multiple images.

15 24. The system as in claim 23, wherein said multiple images are images obtained at different times.

20 25. The system as in claim 23, wherein said multiple images are images obtained simultaneously.

26. A system as in claim 23, further comprising a text generator, which produces a textual display indicative of parameters being sensed.

27. A system as in claim 1, wherein said endoscope section is formed of an optical waveguide.

28. A system as in claim 1, wherein said endoscope section is formed of an electrical cable, and a camera receiving optical information near said image receiving portion of said endoscope.

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29. A system as in claim 27, wherein said optical waveguide includes an optical fiber.

30. A system as in claim 1, wherein said endoscope section has a substantially rounded end.

31. A system as in claim 1, wherein said endoscope section has a substantially flat end.

32. A system as in claim 20, wherein said endoscope section is formed of an optical waveguide.

33. A system as in claim 32, further comprising a connector part, connecting between said endoscope section and said extension cable.

34. A system as in claim 33, wherein said connector part has inner surfaces which align said endoscope section with said extension cable.

35. A system as in claim 34, wherein said sheath has an expanded area in the vicinity of said connector part, with inner surfaces which are sized to accept said connector part.

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36. A system as in claim 35, wherein said sheath is rotatable relative to said connector part.

37. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a first window portion defined in said sleeve assembly.

38. A system as in claim 1, wherein said sleeve assembly is formed of an optically non-clear material, and said window is formed to allow light to pass through said window portion in said sleeve assembly.

39. A system as in claim 37, wherein said optical element is configured to reflect light to substantially an entire part of said endoscope section.

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40. A system as in claim 37, wherein said optical element is configured to reflect light to only a portion of said endoscope section.

41. A system as in claim 40, further comprising a second window portion, formed in a different area than said first window portion.

5 42. A system as in claim 41, wherein incoming light from said first window portion is coupled to said optical element, and incoming light from said second window portion is not coupled to said optical element.

10 43. A system as in claim 42, wherein said optical element includes a mirror, and said second window portion is formed in an area which is axially adjacent said endoscope section, and incoming light from said second window portion is coupled directly to said second window section without being reflected  
15 by said mirror.

44. A system as in claim 42, further comprising displaying images from both said first window portion and said second window portion.

20 45. A system as in claim 42, wherein said optical element includes a mirror, and further comprising an image processor that mirror-inverts said images from said first window portion,

but does not mirror-invert said images from said second window portion.

46. A system as in claim 45, further comprising displaying  
5 simultaneously the images from the first window portion and from said second window portion.

47. A system as in claim 1, further comprising a surgical tool, coupled to said sheath.

48. A system as in claim 47, wherein said tool includes a forceps.

49. A system as in claim 1, further comprising an  
15 illumination element, providing illumination to an area being imaged.

50. A system as in claim 49, wherein said illumination element comprises an optical waveguide.

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51. The system as in claim 49, wherein said sheath is formed of optically transparent material with reflective coatings, and said illumination is coupled to said optically transparent material.

52. A system as in claim 51, further comprising an opening in the reflective coatings in an area of the area being imaged.

5 53. A system as in claim 52, wherein said opening is an annular opening.

54. A system as in claim 28, further comprising an optical element, coupling optical energy to said electrical element.

55. An assembly, comprising:

an endoscope part, having a first portion adapted to receive optical energy, and a second portion adapted to supply information indicative of the optical energy;

15 a sheath, extending generally along an axis, and having an inner surface which is sized to be larger than an outer surface of said endoscope part, and located around said endoscope part, said sheath having an optical window located in a location which forms a predetermined non-zero degree angle with said axis, and

20 having an optical portion located to change a direction of incoming optical energy from said optical window to the direction of said axis.

56. An assembly as in claim 55, wherein said optical element is a mirror that forms a first fixed angle relative to said axis, to thereby reflect optical energy from a specified viewing area to said optical axis.

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57. An assembly as in claim 56, further comprising at least one additional sheath, having a mirror which forms a fixed angle which is different than said first fixed angle, and which can be used with said endoscope part.

58. An assembly as in claim 55, wherein said optical element is a mirror, and further comprising a pivotal mount for said mirror, allowing said mirror to be moved between different angular positions.

59. An assembly as in claim 55, further comprising a pivotal mount for said sheath, allowing said sheath to be rotated relative to said endoscope part, to receive light from a different orientation and image a different viewing area to said endoscope part.

60. An assembly as in claim 58, further comprising a pivotal mount for said sheath, allowing said sheath to be rotated relative to said endoscope part, to receive light from a

different orientation and image a different viewing area to said endoscope part.

61. An assembly as in claim 55, further comprising a  
5 cavity formed in said sheath, said cavity receiving irrigation fluid.

62. An assembly as in claim 61, wherein said cavity  
includes an opening near said optical element, such that said  
10 irrigation fluid washes across a surface of said optical element.

63. An assembly as in claim 55, wherein said endoscope  
part includes an optical waveguide.  
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64. An assembly as in claim 55, wherein said endoscope  
part includes a camera, and an electrical wire receiving  
electrical signals from said camera.

20 65. An assembly as in claim 55, further comprising a video section, receiving said information indicative of the optical energy.

66. An assembly as in claim 65, wherein said video section includes an image processor which processes information indicative of the optical energy as an image.

5 67. An assembly as in claim 66, wherein said optical element is an element that inverts an image, and said image processor includes an image inversion element which inverts said image.

10 68. An assembly as in claim 55, wherein said optical element couples said incoming optical energy to only a portion of said endoscope part.

15 69. An assembly as in claim 68, wherein another portion of said endoscope part receives incoming optical energy indicative of another view.

70. An assembly as in claim 55, further comprising illuminating an area of viewing.

20 71. An assembly as in claim 70, wherein said sheath is formed of optically transparent materials, and said illuminating comprises illuminating said area via said optically transparent materials.

72. A method, comprising:

obtaining an optical image using an endoscope; and  
mirror inverting at least a portion of said image.

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73. A method as in claim 72, further comprising varying an  
angle from which said optical image is obtained.

74. A method as in claim 73, wherein said varying  
comprises moving a mirror to a new location to obtain said  
optical image from a different angle.

75. A method as in claim 73, wherein said varying  
comprises using a different mirror in a different fixed location  
to obtain said optical image from a different angle.

76. A method as in claim 72, wherein said mirror inverting  
comprises inverting an entire optical image.

77. A method as in claim 72, further comprising obtaining  
another optical image using the endoscope, and wherein said  
mirror inverting comprises inverting only said optical image,  
and not said another optical image.

78. A method as in claim 72, wherein said obtaining comprises obtaining optical energy indicative of an image, and using an optical waveguide to couple said optical image.

5 79. A method as in claim 72, wherein said obtaining comprises using a camera in said endoscope to obtain electrical energy indicative of an image, and using an electrical line to couple said electrical energy indicative of said image.

10 80. A method as in claim 72, wherein said obtaining comprises obtaining a view from an angle relative to an axis of said endoscope, and using a mirror to reflect said view in a direction of said axis.

15 81. A method as in claim 80, wherein said mirror reflects said image in a way that covers an entire active area of said endoscope.

20 82. A method as in claim 80, wherein said mirror reflects said image in a way that covers only a part of an entire active area of said endoscope.

83. A method as in claim 82, further comprising obtaining another image using the active area of said endoscope other than said part of said active area.

5 84. A method as in claim 83 wherein said endoscope includes an optical fiber, and said mirror reflects said image to only a portion of said optical fiber.

10 85. A method as in claim 72, further comprising providing illumination for a view obtained by said endoscope.

86. A method as in claim 72, further comprising allowing rotation of an area of imaging.

15 87. A method, comprising:  
inserting an endoscope into a body cavity;  
first obtaining an image from said endoscope from a  
specified viewing area in said body cavity; and  
without removing said endoscope from said body cavity,  
20 second obtaining an image of a different viewing area than said  
specified viewing area.

88. A method as in claim 87, wherein said first obtaining an image comprises obtaining an image from a direction that makes a specified nonzero angle with an axis of said endoscope.

5 89. A method as in claim 88, wherein said second obtaining comprises rotating said endoscope in said body cavity to orient to a different angle.

10 90. A method as in claim 87, wherein said obtaining comprises using a mirror to reflect an image from a direction that makes a nonzero angle with an axis of said endoscope, to a direction of said axis of said endoscope.

15 91. A method as in claim 87, wherein said second obtaining comprises moving an internal component of said endoscope to change a viewing angle.

92. A method as in claim 91, wherein said component is a mirror.

20 93. A method as in claim 91, wherein said moving comprises actuating an electronic motor to move said component.

94. A method as in claim 88, wherein said second obtaining comprises moving a component of said endoscope to change said nonzero angle and thereby view a different viewing area.

5 95. A method as in claim 94, wherein said component of said endoscope which is moved is a component which is internal to said endoscope.

10 96. A method as in claim 94, wherein said component is a mirror.

15 97. A method as in claim 88, wherein said second obtaining comprises either rotating said endoscope in said body cavity to orient to a different angle, and/or moving a component of said endoscope to change an effective viewing angle by changing an angle of an optical path being imaged by said endoscope.

20 98. A method as in claim 97, wherein said component of said endoscope is an internal component which is moved to change said optical path.

99. A method as in claim 97, wherein said component is a mirror.

100. A method, comprising:

using an endoscope to obtain an optical image from a body cavity of a patient; and

varying an angle from which said optical image is obtained.

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101. A method as in claim 99, further comprising varying an angle relative to an axis of said endoscope, from which said optical image is obtained.

102. A method as in claim 100, wherein said varying comprises moving a mirror to a new location to obtain said optical image from a different angle.

103. A method as in claim 100, wherein said varying comprises using a different mirror in a different fixed location to obtain said optical image from a different angle.

104. A method as in claim 100, wherein said varying comprises moving a movable optical element to a different location which reflects optical energy at a different angle.

105. A method as in claim 100, wherein said optical image is obtained in the form of optical energy, and is guided on a light waveguide in said endoscope.

106. A method as in claim 105, wherein said light waveguide is a fiber-optic cable.

5        107. A method as in claim 100, wherein said optical image is obtained in the form of electrical energy, and is guided on an electrical cable in said endoscope.

108. A method, comprising:  
10        first obtaining a first image from a first position in a body cavity; and  
         second obtaining, using the same device as used to obtain said first image, and simultaneously in time to receiving said first image, a second image from a second position in the same  
15        body cavity.

109. A method as in claim 108, further comprising image processing said first image and said second image.

20        110. A method as in claim 109, wherein said image processing comprises image processing said first image in a different way than image processing in said second image.

111. A method as in claim 110, wherein said image processing in said first image includes mirror-inverting said first image, and said image processing in said second image does not include mirror-inverting said second image.

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112. A method as in claim 108, wherein said first and second obtaining comprises obtaining an image from the first position and applying the image from the first position to a first portion of an image acquisition element, and said second obtaining comprises obtaining the image from the second position, and applying this image from the second position to a second portion of the image acquisition element, different than the first portion of the image acquisition element.

113. A method as in claim 112, where the image acquisition element includes a light waveguide.

114. A method as in claim 112, where the image acquisition element includes an electronic camera.

115. An endoscope, comprising:

a scope portion, which extends in a first direction, and which includes an image coupling element for acquiring an image and coupling said image in said first direction, said scope

portion formed with a window which is positioned to acquire an image from a direction that makes a nonzero angle with said first direction; and

an optical direction changing element, which changes a  
5 direction of said image from said direction, to the first direction.

116. An endoscope as in claim 115, wherein said image coupling element includes an optical waveguide.

117. An endoscope as in claim 116, wherein said optical waveguide includes an optical fiber.

118. An endoscope as in claim 115, wherein said image coupling element includes an electronic camera and a cable  
15 carrying an electrical signal from said electronic camera.

119. An endoscope as in claim 115, wherein said direction changing element includes a mirror.

20 120. An endoscope as in claim 119, wherein said mirror includes a hinging element, and is movable relative to said hinging element.

121. An endoscope, comprising:

a scope portion, having a first window adapted to acquire  
an image of a first viewing area from a first direction, and a  
second window adapted to acquire an image of a second viewing  
5 area from a second direction, different than said first  
direction; and

an image element, simultaneously acquiring said images from  
said first and second viewing areas.

122. An endoscope as in claim 121, wherein said image  
10 element includes an optical waveguide.

123. An endoscope as in claim 121, wherein said image  
element includes an electrical camera.

124. An endoscope as in claim 121, further comprising a  
15 direction changing element which changes an angle of said image  
from said first direction.

20 125. An endoscope as in claim 124, wherein said direction  
changing element includes a movable element which changes a  
direction of a light path.

126. An endoscope as in claim 124, wherein said direction changing element includes a hinged portion coupled to said scope portion.

5 127. An endoscope as in claim 124, wherein said scope portion includes a mirror at a fixed angle, and said direction changing element includes a separate portion of said scope portion which includes a mirror at a different fixed angle.

10 128. An endoscope as in claim 121, further comprising an image processor, which image processes said image of said first viewing area in a different way than image processing of said image of said second viewing area.

15 129. An endoscope as in claim 128, wherein said different way comprises inverting said image of said first viewing area.

130. A method, comprising:

an endoscope portion including an optical coupling element

20 and a sheath covering said optical coupling element; and

an image processing element, receiving an image from said optical coupling element, and processing said image to invert at least a portion of said image.

131. An apparatus as in claim 130, wherein said image processing element also selectively rotates said image.

132. An apparatus as in claim 130, wherein said image  
5 processing element also adds text to said image, said text indicative of conditions of imaging.

133. An apparatus as in claim 130, wherein said sheath  
includes an optical element which changes an angle of incidence  
10 of incoming light.

134. A method, comprising:

using an optical endoscope with a sheath to obtain an image  
from a specified nonzero angle of incidence relative to said  
15 endoscope; and

changing a sheath to use a different another sheath that  
images from a different angle of incidence, and then using said  
optical endoscope to obtain a second image from a second  
specified nonzero angle of incidence.

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135. A method as in claim 135, further comprising  
illuminating said image using a same optical path as is used for  
said imaging, to illuminate said image at any angle of incidence  
being currently used.

136. An endoscope, comprising:  
an optical receiving element, and  
an optical endoscope system obtaining an image of a  
5 specified area, and coupling said image to only a portion of  
said optical receiving element, a rest of said optical receiving  
element being used for a purpose other than obtaining said image  
of said specified area.

10 137. An endoscope as in claim 136, wherein said purpose is  
for obtaining another image, different than said image of said  
specified area.